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East Germans Charge Milwaukeean as Spy

Columbia U Student Was Jailed Sept. 5

A Milwaukeean seized in East Berlin in September will be tried by the Communist government on charges of spying for the United States government, it was said Tuesday. Ronald V. Wiedenhoef, 30, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kurt W. Wiedenhoef, 3811 N. 42nd st., is being held in an East German prison. He was arrested Sept. 5 while doing research for a doctoral thesis for Columbia university where he is a student and part time instructor.

The date of his trial was unknown, the government said. Wiedenhoef is charged with espionage, it said.

The state department released a statement sharply criticizing East German authorities for Wiedenhoef's arrest.

"The mysterious arrest and detention of this university instructor who was in East Berlin to pursue his doctoral dissertation on Berlin architecture is most disturbing to the United States," the statement said.

"We have been unable to learn of the charges against Mr. Wiedenhoef. His wife and two small children have received no word about his whereabouts or the reason for his arrest.

"The fact is he has been held incommunicado by East German authorities.

"We view this detention as a blatant disregard of an individual as we do similarly the prolonged period of detention in the case of Peter T. Feinauer."

Feinauer, a 28 year old art student from Providence, R. I., was arrested in East Berlin Oct. 7, 1966, and subsequently sentenced to 15 years in an East German prison. Feinauer was held until his trial — on charges of espionage and being an agent of the CIA — without formal charges.

"We shall continue to exert every effort we can to secure the release of Mr. Wiedenhoef and Mr. Feinauer," the state department said.

Wiedenhoef, a preceptor in art history and archeology at Columbia, left New York for Germany June 10, with his wife, Renate, 24, and two children, Sonja, 6 and Sabina, 1, on a flight chartered by the university. They were traveling on a Columbia travel grant, according to his mother.

He had been to East Berlin twice before his arrest on photographic expeditions to gather material for his thesis, his mother said.

She left Milwaukee Sept. 6, the day after his arrest, on a three week excursion flight. Mrs. Wiedenhoef said, without being aware that her son had been detained.

When she arrived in Germany, Mrs. Wiedenhoef said, she telephoned her daughter-in-law in West Berlin.

Her son's wife was born in Berlin, Mrs. Wiedenhoef said, and his in-laws still reside there. The couple and their children lived with them while he was in Germany working on his thesis, Mrs. Wiedenhoef said.

"I wanted to surprise them," Mrs. Wiedenhoef said. "When

I arrived in Frankfurt, I called Berlin and was told he hadn't returned from East Berlin. My daughter-in-law said he went there with the intention of photographing architecture."

When Wiedenhoef failed to return to West Berlin, his wife went to East Berlin searching for him, his mother said. The wife notified East Berlin police, American military police officials and hospitals, Mrs. Wiedenhoef said.

Discovered Nothing

"She couldn't find out anything," the elder Mrs. Wiedenhoef said. "She went over the same evening and the next day. And then she was told she could call the state prosecutor and she went to talk to him Friday at 2 p.m. (Sept. 8 — three days after Wiedenhoef was jailed).

"And he admitted they were holding him."

Mrs. Wiedenhoef said they had hired an attorney in West Berlin and another in East Berlin, but so far no one had been permitted to see her son. He has not been able to write letters and his wife has not been able to contact him, she said.

Returned Last Month

Mrs. Wiedenhoef returned to Milwaukee last month, she said, but her son's wife and their children remained with her parents in West Berlin.

Mrs. Wiedenhoef said her daughter-in-law learned last Friday that he would stand trial for spying, but was not told when.

"She said it might take weeks or months."

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Wiedenhoef, who was born in Milwaukee, met his wife when he took graduate courses in Munich. They were married in Germany Aug. 26, 1960.

A civil engineer, Wiedenhoef and his wife returned to the United States, where he worked for a construction firm and studied art evenings at Columbia.

He later returned to Wisconsin and received a master's degree in art history from the University of Wisconsin.

Wiedenhoef's brother, Ralph, 35, is pastor of Deerfield Lutheran church and Liberty Lutheran church in Deerfield (Dane county). A sister, Mrs. Gerhard Strauss, 23, lives in Tallahassee, Fla.

Wiedenhoef's parents were born in Germany. His mother, Victoria, 57, was born in Berlin. His father, who is 62, was born in Kiel. He is a retired mason contractor.

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